

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

Coffee Can Theatre is a unique teaching strategy that incorporates all kindergarten readiness skills through storytelling.

This schools' kindergarten staff was charged with planning the language arts curriculum for the new full day program. Three objectives or assumptions were to be kept in mind. First, all youngsters come to their first educational experience with vast differences in cognitive capabilities. Second, students are best instructed with programs that key into multiple learning styles. Third, sound instruction must continually seek to address affective development - motivation, imagination, and love of learning. The teachers were given a free hand to develop innovative techniques to promote literacy and language and to captivate the students with good literature. The result of this planning was the practice we call Coffee Can Theatre.

The practice is rather simplistic. A teacher selects a piece of children's literature. The classics, the district's basal and cross curriculum trade books serve as sources. Then an empty, colorfully decorated coffee can (with a lid) is filled with props and other tiny objects that illustrate a chosen piece of literature. For example, in gathering objects for the well known story, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, by Eric Carle, one would get a miniature toy caterpillar, 1 apple, 2 pears, 3 plums, a butterfly and a leaf with a larva sack attached to it and place the objects in the can. The teacher would then gather the students in a typical kindergarten circle area and shake the can to have the children auditorially cued for listening. The teacher, who has gotten very familiar with the plot of this book, begins to tell the story and one by one, pulls out objects. The characters come to life as the story unfolds.

Children who are mathematical, spatial or kinesthetic learners are captivated by the interactive approach. Linguistic learners are encouraged to make predictions or to parrot the story line. Interpersonal learners will enjoy dramatizing and retelling the story. The intrapersonal learners are successful because they can focus on the objects and not themselves. The story is told and retold developing ownership. Positive interaction within the group generates a feeling of success.

One goal of the project is to promote imagination and to develop higher level thinking skills. The teacher can lead story discussion right up Bloom's Taxonomy. Children recall details, story sequence, character traits, setting and plot steps. They explore the author's literary style, they make evaluative judgements, they relate story aspects to their own lives.

From The Very Hungry Caterpillar, the children review story details noticing Carle's use of food patterns; they relate to what the caterpillar eats; they compare the caterpillar's growth and life cycle stages to their own growth and maturing.

After the teacher presents the Coffee Can Theatre, the children are asked to relate the story using the props. A retelling activity happens as many as ten different times (in front of the large group, in pairs, in a cooperative group, with Mom and Dad at home).

The final step of the Coffee Can Theatre is the teacher's assessing of each child with a response activity rubric devised for the story. Throughout the year, many Coffee Can Theatres are prepared and presented by the teaching staff.

This project is easily replicated with relatively low cost for materials. Time is needed for the teachers to prepare text selection, gather props, practice story telling and design the rubric. The versatility of the Coffee Can Theatre project allows us to meet all levels of student literacy addressing them in a welcoming, non-threatening approach. An early childhood teacher could

implement a Coffee Can Theatre in tomorrow's lesson plans. Since the window of opportunity for language development quickly closes, the best instruction, early on, saturates children with opportunities to listen, speak, read, write and appreciate fine literature.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum Content and Cross -Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standards.

Prior to their entrance in kindergarten, each student is screened with DIAL-R, an individual assessment of cognitive, speech and motor skills. Parents are asked to contribute a great deal of background information about their child in the parent survey. Composite results give us information about the typical child entering our kindergarten. We have learned that our population of children: (1) didn't spend time in preschool (2) don't get read to on a regular basis (3) don't have access to lots of age appropriate printed material (4) come with limited general knowledge (5) have limited vocabulary development (6) have problems with oral fluency and verbal expression that is oftentimes less than complete thoughts (7) have short attention spans and (8) have speech articulation problems.

The instructional needs of this district's kindergarten include: developing literacy and mathematical readiness, teaching students how to assimilate new information and teaching children the art of listening. Year long use of the Coffee Can Theatre practice addresses the needs of children with limited exposure to literature and language and tackles the instructional needs of a solid kindergarten program.

This practice encompasses the Core Curriculum Content Language Arts Literacy Standard for listening (3.2), speaking (3.1), reading (3.4) and writing (3.3) with literature serving as the driving force. It is a wonderful technique for kindergarten level students to begin preparing for the speaking component of the ESPA Grade 4 Test.

The Literacy Standard makes four assumptions about learning language: it is an active process, it is social, it increases in complexity and it explores many dimensions (from the Core Curriculum Content Standards, pg. 3-2). If a teacher regularly uses the Coffee Can Theatre technique, the above criteria for effective language arts instruction has been met.

In addition, the teacher can select books, stories, poems, etc., that span all curricular areas. In particular, the Core Content Curriculum Standards noted are reflected in the Coffee Can Theatres prepared by this staff: Visual and Performing Arts 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

Mathematics 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11

Science 5.4, 5.7

Social Studies 6.7

As stated on page 3-2 of the Core Curriculum Content Standards, "We want students to develop the skills they will need to bring to society as adults: critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. On the other hand, we want students to discover the inner joy and self-illumination that comes with reading great literature and communicating well in speech and writing..." It's hard to believe, but all this can be done with a coffee can and a little storytelling magic.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.




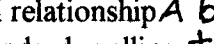


Data on the success of the Coffee Can Theatre practice spans two years and utilizes three assessment measures: (1) documenting throughout the year group and individual growth on the response activity rubrics (2) documenting throughout the year group and individual growth on the district's Writing Sample instrument and (3) the district's retention rate for kindergarten students.

The Response Activity Rubric

Students are asked to draw a picture and write or tell about the plot of the selected story. The teacher assesses the efforts of each student using a 3 point scale. The score of "3" indicates excellent comprehension. The child's writing demonstrates competence in the command of letters and letter/sound relationships. The drawing accurately depicts the story line. The score of "2" can be thought of as adequate comprehension. The child's writing indicates the beginning development of sound symbol relationships. The child's drawing reasonably depicts the story line. The score of "1" can be thought of as minimal comprehension. The child's writing has no letter like form or no writing at all. The drawing minimally depicts the story line.

For both years, a beginning of the year response activity rubric shows that 80% of the students fall in the "1" range and 0% in the "3" range. End of the year rubrics show only 5% of the population in the "1" range; 55% in the "2" range and 40% in the "3" range.

Children's Writing Samples

Teachers designate the developmental stage of each student's writing. Writing samples are done periodically throughout the year. The developmental stages are assessed 1 - 6: Stage 1 scribbling ; Stage 2 linear, repetitive drawing ; Stage 3 letter-like forms ; Stage 4 letter and early word symbol relationship ; Stage 5 inventive spelling ; and Stage 6 standard spelling .

In September, the kindergarten population for both years showed 15% in Stage 1, 55% in Stage 2, 25% in Stage 3, 5% in Stage 4 and 0% in Stages 5 or 6. By the end of the year, results show no one in Stage 1, 15% in Stage 2, 40% in Stage 3, 40% in Stage 4 and 5% in Stage 5.

Retention Rates

A significant achievement is demonstrated here. Prior to using the intense language development activity of the Coffee Can Theatre practice, the district occurred a retention rate of 9 to 10% annually. Using portfolios, parent conferencing and the response activity rubrics and writing stage documentation on report cards to measure preparedness for first grade, we find 95+% of students promotable with a decrease in the retention level to under 5%. In addition, the small, but needy ESL population of this school's Kindergarten has over the last two years been found 100% promotable.

The positive results of these assessment measures are attributed to the use of the Coffee Can Theatre practice. The Coffee Can Theatre practice has shown other intangible benefits as supported by parent and teacher input.

Parents ask to use Coffee Can Theatre materials at home. They report that their children "ask to read" at home, particularly stories and authors that have been experienced in a Coffee Can Theatre at school, and that the children want to come to school to learn.

Teachers notice that children are motivated to listen. They see their students emulating the teacher's storytelling style. They observe that the children are talking more and that they are talking less. The Coffee Can Theatre practice couples the art of story telling with sound assessment and has proven in this school to have significant impact on students' readiness skills.